

Geographic Influences in the Early History of Vermont

A DISSERTATION
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY
OF THE
OGDEN GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SCIENCE
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF SCIENCE
DEPARTMENT OF GEOGRAPHY

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CHICAGO, ILLINOIS
SEPTEMBER, 1922

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CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

Vermont was settled much later than the neighboring colonies. By 1760, the year which marks the beginning of any considerable settlement in Vermont, Massachusetts included communities more than a hundred years old, and had a population of about 300,000. Settlers from Connecticut, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts were steadily making their way into New Hampshire. The Dutch had won and lost their supremacy along the Hudson, and New York had become one of the prosperous and influential English colonies in America. The French had extended their hold from their early position on the St. Lawrence, until checked by the English conquest of 1759 and 1760. Here, flanked on all sides by expanding frontiers, lay a region of fertile valleys and forest-clad hills, with an abundant water supply and abounding in game, rendered accessible by navigable streams and valley routes. Trails established by the Iroquois and Algonquins were known and travelled by French and English hunters long before settlement began. Both powers had built forts on the Champlain shores as early as 1660, and the region was crossed again and again, during the French and Indian wars. It was not lack of familiarity with the advantages the region afforded for settlement which was responsible for the tardy development, but the position of the region between the territories of the rival powers.

The flow of immigration into Vermont began with the cessation in this region of hostilities between Great Britain and France. In the first three years of peace, Benning Wentworth, governor of New Hampshire, made grants in the state of approximately 130 townships. The physical attractions of the region encouraged competition for its oc-

cupation. In 1790, 85,000 people were living in Vermont; and in 1800 the number had increased to 154,000. The rate of increase in population was soon reduced by the tide of western emigration. As early as 1810, while new lands were still being cleared in Vermont, some of the settlements were losing their founders to New York and the Western Reserve.

With few exceptions, the early settlers of Vermont came from the neighboring colonies, particularly Connecticut and Massachusetts. There was a marked tendency for people from one community to make up a large proportion of the population of a new settlement. Norwich, on the Connecticut river furnished a striking example of this. In 1770 there were 206 people living in this township, all of whom, so far as known, came from Mansfield and its vicinity in eastern Connecticut.¹ Probably one of the reasons for their emigration was the advantage the fertile plains of the river valley afforded over the less productive soils of their old homes. The natural tendency to expansion was no longer restricted by the threat of Indian raids and the dangers of war. New, cheap land was available. The propinquity of the region to the settled areas of the older colonies, with routes leading from them into Vermont, can hardly be over emphasized as a factor in the settlement of the state. The first settler of Norwich passed four consecutive summers clearing his land and preparing the soil for cultivation, before he brought his family to their pioneer home. Each fall he travelled a distance of 150 miles to spend the winter months in Mansfield, Connecticut, going by canoe on the Connecticut river, and following a trail thru the woods. The relatively close connection of the border settlers in Vermont with their earlier homes gave each Vermont settlement ground for the feeling that it was simply an outpost of the mother colony. This conviction on the part of the settlers explains to a certain

¹Goddard, History of Norwich, 1905. P. 39.

extent their attitude toward the boundary controversies which later arose, and the struggle between New York and New Hampshire for the control of Vermont.

Geographic factors largely determined the distribution of population in Vermont. Of these factors the routes of entry played the greatest part. The Connecticut river was the great highway to the region. From it settlement spread along its western tributaries, and over mountain passes to the western flanks of the Green Mountains, and the borders of Lake Champlain. The most important of the upper Connecticut routes led by the Ompompanoosuc and Passumpsic rivers to the head waters of the Winooski and Lamoille. The central part of the state was crossed from the Quechee and White rivers over divides to the Otter Creek. These routes were supplemented by streams and trails across the southern and western parts of the state which led to the interior, or by lake routes to the north. One of the western routes most travelled by early settlers followed the Deerfield river, a trail to the Pawlet, thence on Lake Champlain to the north. In general there was a tendency for the first clearings to be made on the higher lands, as in many places the soil of the valley bottoms was wet and heavy, and the forest stand denser than on the hills. Other sites for settlement were selected with an eye to a future grist mill or sawmill, near a beaver dam which could be drained for cultivation, within easy reach of streams which led to other communities, or on areas that had been cleared by the French or Indians. Many a soldier in his travels across the state had been attracted by some particular spot, which he determined to make his own when peace should allow him to claim it. The two first settlers of Newbury, returning from Montreal to Hampstead, New Hampshire, after the close of the French and Indian war, spent some time in what was known as the Coos country on the upper Connecticut. "They decided that it was a desirable place to settle in, the gateway to a vast country above, a central point which should command the

trade of a vast region."¹ In the summer of 1761 they returned with several companions to these meadows which the St. Francis Indians had formerly cleared and cultivated, and are reported to have "secured about 90 tons of excellent hay."²

The story of the pioneer life of the people involves a study of their exploitation of the natural resources. Areas such as those of the Coos country, where large tracts were ready for cultivation, were exceptions to the general rule. The forest presented the great common problem, but there were compensations for the labor which the presence of the forest imposed. The newly cleared land was in general fertile, and well adapted to a variety of grains, vegetables and fruits. Corn and wheat were usually the first crops raised. In many cases the first season's effort was rewarded by a harvest. Game hunted in the forests was the chief source of meat. The maples furnished the sugar. The trees felled provided building material and an abundance of fuel. In addition to these necessities, the surplus timber supplied the first, and for sometime the only product which the settlers could export, and for which they received cash. This product was potash, which was made by boiling hard wood ashes to the form of what was known as "salts." Household industries progressed hand in hand with the conquest of the forest and the utilization of the land. The family of the early settler constituted an industrial community which supplied the everyday needs of food, clothing, and shelter. Gradually other industries grew up in response to demand, and the resources of the region. Iron forges, lime kilns, brickyards, blacksmith shops, tanneries, carding and fulling mills were scattered over the area. Quarries were opened very early, and worked in an unpretentious way for local use.

Commerce and trade passed thru stages commensurate with the development of the resources within the region.

¹Wells: Newbury, p. 16.

²Ibid: p. 16.

The early standard of value in local trade was a bushel of wheat. With it a whole range of payments was made, from taxes to the minister's salary. Wheat formed a large item of export. The principal markets for the products of Vermont in this early period, were Albany, Boston, Portland, Portsmouth, Montreal, and Quebec. Because of the difficulties of transportation and the long distances from markets, the variety of exports was limited. The coarser grains, and potatoes, raised in quantities beyond the needs of the people, could not compete with wheat as export products. They were utilized to a considerable extent in distilleries. Grains, wool, maple sugar, and salts were important early exports. Live stock was driven to market by long and tedious routes. With better roads and improved transportation facilities, butter, cheese, and salted meats were added to the export list. Building stone held an important place in exports. One of the earlier marble quarries was opened in 1785. From that time marble began to replace slate and limestone as a material for chimney backs and hearthstones. A few years later marble became a valued export in a variety of forms. Timber for shipbuilding was in demand from an early date. It is reported that masts floated down the Connecticut for use in the Napoleonic wars were supplied to France from eastern Vermont. Lumber trade with Quebec was established in 1794. Rafts of oak and pine were floated from the vicinity of Burlington on Lake Champlain to the St. Lawrence ports. This trade increased and flourished for many years. In 1820, by the completion of the Champlain canal, a market for the timber of this region was opened in New York. The connection of western Vermont with New York in trade and commercial interests has always been marked, while that of eastern Vermont has been tied to the Connecticut and focused on Boston. This tendency, a natural result of the location of the two great valley routes is emphasized by the position of the Green Mountains between them. At the same time the Green Mountains have served in certain ways, to tie the lowland

sections of the state together. They form a unit within the borders of the state; from them the settlers obtained two great sources of wealth, lumber and minerals: they furnished a common stronghold when the state was threatened with political and territorial disruption.

It is the purpose of this study to point out, along the lines here indicated, the various ways in which geographic conditions influenced settlement and economic development in Vermont, from the earliest settlement, to the period of active westward emigration.

CHAPTER II.

PERIOD AND RATE OF SETTLEMENT

The position of Vermont between the territories of rival powers was largely responsible for the late period of the settlement of the state. The period of immigration begins at 1760 and extends probably thru the year 1820 when the tide of westward emigration had definitely set in. The character of the region, with routes of entry on the east and west and a central mountain barrier, made it difficult for either power, the French or the English, to gain a distinct advantage over the other. It would appear that these very routes of entry which facilitated settlement when peace was established, precluded settlement while a condition of war existed. Had one or the other side of the state been without a good north and south route from which entry to the interior could be made, settlement might have been accomplished earlier, as the power which had the advantage of position would have been less exposed to attack from the other. But the position geographically had the effect that equal military preparedness has upon two nations,—it delayed advance from either side. This factor was operative under Indian occupation, before the white man invaded their country. There were few

areas where villages or permanent headquarters were established. It was a disputed territory between the Algonquins and Iroquois tribes. Under these geographic conditions it was natural that the first attempts at occupation of the area, by white men as well as by Indians, should have been along the margins, in the Lake Champlain and Connecticut river valleys, and that such attempts as were made by the French and English should have taken the form of forts and strongholds for the security of their territory.

In 1666 Captain de La Motte, acting under the direction of the lieutenant-general of the French possessions in America, built a small fort on the island in Grand Isle County which bears his name. This was the fourth in a line of strongholds erected by the French to secure their position from the mouth of the Richelieu river into Lake Champlain. Alarmed at this southward penetration on the part of the French, the New York authorities built a little stone fort at Crown Point in 1690, but it was not continuously occupied, and in 1731 the French erected a stronghold at the same place. The previous year they had built a blockhouse opposite Crown Point, at Chimney Point in Addison County. Here a few cabins were built, a windmill erected, fruit trees planted, and small clearings made for the cultivation of crops. In 1756 a French fort was erected at Ticonderoga. These posts were occupied by small garrisons of soldiers, and raids against the English frontier were sent out from them. They also served as headquarters for hunting and fishing operations. Little communities of a few families grew up about them, but the settlement was incidental to the political and commercial interests. After the English captured Ticonderoga in July, 1759, the forts on both sides of the lake were burned and the settlers retreated to Canada with the French army. This was the end of the French attempt at settlement on Vermont soil.

Fort Dummer, the earliest of the Connecticut valley forts was erected by the government of Massachusetts in the southeastern corner of the town of Brattleborough, on

territory which at that time was a part of Massachusetts. It was erected here, at a point commanding the Connecticut routes, for the purpose of guarding the frontier towns which, from the outbreak of King William's war in 1689, had suffered from Indian raids. The most serious of these resulted in the destruction of Deerfield, Massachusetts. In 1704 a company of French and Indians under De Rouville came up Lake Champlain to the Winooski which they followed to a divide to the eastern slope of the mountains, thence to the upper waters of the Connecticut. They descended the Connecticut to the vicinity of Deerfield. On the night of February 29th they surprised this little settlement, burning the buildings, and killing forty-nine of the inhabitants, and carrying one hundred and eleven captive to Canada. One hundred and thirty-six escaped alive.¹ Other raids followed and the settlers in northern Massachusetts and Connecticut and western New Hampshire were in constant fear of attack. The Massachusetts Court Records, December 27, 1723, recount the action taken for the erection of Fort Dummer.

"Voted that it will be of great service to all the western frontiers, both in this and the neighboring government of Connecticut, to build a Block House above Northfield, . . . and to post in it forty able men, English and Western Indians, to be employed in scouting at a good distance up the Connecticut River, West River, Otter Creek, and sometimes eastwardly, above great Monadnuck, for the discovery of the enemy coming towards any of the frontier towns."²

The fort was ready for occupation in the fall of 1724. It was 180 feet square, with houses built inside the stockade, which could be occupied as a second line of defence in case the enemy should break thru the enclosure. It was built of Norway pine, a material that was abundant in the vicinity.

¹Thompson: History of Greefield i. 85-9

²Collins: History of Vermont, p. 13.

Several forts were erected for the same purpose by the New Hampshire government along the Connecticut in the vicinity of the towns of Hinsdale, Rockingham, and Westminster. The best known of these forts, "Number Four," was built in 1740 on the east side of the Connecticut at the site of the present town of Charlestown, New Hampshire. This fort became the eastern terminus of a route later much followed across the state to Crown Point on Lake Champlain.

The presence of these outposts of defence against the French and Indians led a few venturesome pioneers to attempt homes near them. A number of little communities of one or two families each were thus established. As early as 1735 a survey was made and twenty-eight towns marked out by the Massachusetts government between the Connecticut and Merrimack rivers on land which later became a part of New Hampshire. Two townships were granted in what are now Rockingham and Westminster. In 1740 the northern boundary line of Massachusetts was decreed by King George II to be a

"Curve line pursuing the course of the Merrimack River at three miles distance on the north side thereof, beginning at the Atlantic Ocean and ending due north of a place called Pantucket Falls, and by a straight line drawn from thence due west across the said river till it meets with our other governments."¹

This line was surveyed the following summer and it was found that Fort Dummer lay within New Hampshire territory, and it was generally believed that the New Hampshire line "extended as far westward as Massachusetts; that is, to a line 20 miles east of Hudson River." In 1749 Benning Wentworth made the first New Hampshire grant within this area, in the southwestern corner of the state. It was called Bennington, in the governor's honor. By 1754 Governor Wentworth had made grants of fifteen townships within the

¹Batchelor: *State Papers of New Hampshire*, Vol. 26, Town Charters Vol. III, Preface iii-iv.

state. The opening of the French and Indian war in that year put a stop to further settlement, and most of the little communities which had been established were abandoned.

These scattered attempts on the part of individuals are important in connection with later settlement because they served as an entering wedge and laid the foundation for permanent settlement when conditions should prevail which favored such settlement; they aroused the bordering colonies to the assertion of claims for the undeveloped region; they helped to make the region known; and they were in most cases later reoccupied. An early historian estimates that there were between 200 and 300 people within the limits of the state previous to the year 1760.¹ But no community which persisted was established in Vermont until 1760, and that year may properly be regarded as the beginning of permanent settlement.

With the return of peace requests for land grants in Vermont were renewed. Governor Wentworth, who before the war had had a taste of the gains accruing to the collection of fees for grants and the possession of his share of land in each township, was not reluctant to continue granting lands. The geographic factors which operated in the location of forts and scattered settlements made prior to the French and Indian wars, were effective in the location of grants. The first grants were made in the Connecticut river valley. A survey was made along the river, and grants for three rows of townships six miles square were made on each side of the river. From the date of the first grant in 1749 thru the year 1764 Governor Wentworth made grants of 129 townships and six individual claims.

In the case of land grants Vermont was again a victim of her position between rivals. In 1750 governor Colden of New York began agitation for the establishment of the eastern boundary of New York at the Connecticut river. In 1764 word was received from the King in council "declaring the western

¹Thompson: History of Vermont, 1842, Pt. II, p. 17.

banks of the river Connecticut from where it enters the province of Massachusetts bay, as far north as the forty-fifth degrees of northern latitude, to be the boundary line between the two provinces of New Hampshire and New York."¹ Without delay the New York governor began making grants. In ten years between 1765 and 1775 three New York governors made grants of 2,115,610 acres of land in Vermont for which the fees amounted to \$66,113.² In addition to this total 303,100 acres in "Military Grants" were added.³ These were made under a royal proclamation of 1763 to soldiers who had served in the French and Indian war. Many of the troops entitled to this land bounty disbanded in New York, sold their claims to speculators, and returned to Europe. Few of the military patentees settled on their lands.⁴ The result of this speculation was to place large holdings in a few hands. In one instance the claims amounting to 25,350 acres, became the property of one man. This land was included in two patents issued by the governor of New York in 1771, and was located in irregular lots which included choice lands in several towns in southwestern Vermont. "Which towns had been chartered by New Hampshire ten years previously, and settled under those charters."⁵ In response to a protest from New Hampshire, and petitions from the settlers, the King in 1767 issued an order forbidding the New York governors to make further grants in the disputed territory. Of the total of 2,115,610 acres granted by New York, "all, except 180,620 acres. . . was granted in direct disobedience to the positive order of the King."⁶

The settlers who had already paid for their rights under New Hampshire and improved their lands were required by

¹Hall: Early History of Vermont, p. 58.

²Vermont Historical Society Collections, Vol. I, pp. 158-9.

³Ibid: pp. 158-9.

⁴Hall: Early History of Vermont, p. 79.

⁵Vermont Historical Society Collections: Vol. I, p. 159.

⁶Ibid: p. 158.

New York, to pay another and larger fee, or give up their property. The details of the struggle between New York and the settlers are not of significance here. The struggle is important in this connection only as it affected the period and rate at which settlement went forward. Altho the persistence with which the settlers clung to their land is marked and there are few if any instances of withdrawal in favor of the New York claimants, it is nevertheless certain that the controversy delayed settlement by those who had received grants, and kept those who might otherwise have applied for land from undertaking settlement. The result was that the grants made by New York were largely taken up by adventurers and speculators, and passed from hand to hand. The struggle was most bitter in the western portion of the state, as it was here that the New York grantees largely attempted settlement. For this reason settlement in the western districts went forward more slowly than in the eastern part of the state. Geographic factors were probably largely responsible for this division in territory as far as settlement was concerned. The country east of the Green Mountains was less well known to the New Yorkers, and the matter of distance was a factor which operated against their selection of sites in eastern Vermont. The mountain barrier proved in this connection a protection to the settlers east of the mountains, and accounts in large part for their lack of opposition to the jurisdiction of New York. The towns along the Connecticut river were among the first to apply for a confirmation of their charters under New York regime. This did not mean that they were in sympathy with New York, or that they welcomed the change in administration; they still felt themselves a part of New Hampshire, with their interests and associations tied to the Connecticut valley. But their position east of the mountains relieved them of the extreme provocation under which the western settlers suffered, of having their territory invaded, surveys over their cultivated fields attempted, and the security of their homes threatened.

It is evident that this treatment would tend to offset the geographic relation of the western part of Vermont to New York, as far as the attitude of the settlers to the government of New York was concerned. And altho in the later history of the state we find that the position of the mountain barrier, and of the water routes functioned to such a degree as to turn much of the trade west of the Green Mountains to the Champlain and Hudson valleys, these geographic factors were not strong enough to overcome the feeling on the part of Vermonters that New York was not in sympathy or interest akin to New England.

The settlers of western Vermont as well as those of the eastern section felt that New York was remote. The lake is too large to serve as a unifying factor in the manner that the Connecticut river served eastern Vermont. Furthermore, its position with regard to the southern extension of the state precluded its effectiveness here. And altho there were routes across the southwestern part of the state which led to the Hudson, particularly those along the Battenkill and Walloomsuc rivers, which were frequently travelled, none of them was to the people of western Vermont what the Connecticut was to eastern Vermont. There are many witnesses to the fact that most of the settlers of Vermont thought of New York as "remote." In the protest which the settlers made to the King against the jurisdiction of New York, the spokesman, Ira Allen, expressed this opinion:

"The great distance," he wrote, "of road betwixt this district and New York is alone a convincing argument that the God of Nature never designed said district should be under the jurisdiction of said state."¹

Probably the difference between the people of these two regions which was so keenly felt was due in large part to the fact that those in control of the New York government were

¹Vermont Historical Society Collections, Vol I, p. 131.

"Tory" in their sympathies. The general political attitude of New York as it proceeded from Albany, was aristocratic, centralized, and restricted in character, as compared to the democratic, localized and independent character of that of Vermont. In New York most of the officers from the governor down the scale, were appointed. Vermonters were trained by inheritance in the New England town meeting system. They chose their officers by election to serve in the capacities for which they were best suited. These differences in political ideals were set forth by the New York governor, as an argument for the extension of New York authority to the Connecticut river.

"The New England governments," he says, "are founded on republican principles, and these principles are zealously inculcated on their youth, in opposition to the principles of the constitution of Great Britain. The government of New York, on the contrary, is established as near as may be, after the model of the English constitutions. Can it be good policy to diminish the extent and jurisdiction of his Majesty's province of New York to extend the power and influence of the other?"¹

This difference was as strongly felt by the Vermonters. In the course of the great controversy Ethan Allen made his famous comment to a New York attorney, that, "The Gods of the valleys are not Gods of the hills."²

An illustration of the difference in the political attitude of the two colonies is found in the character of their land grant systems. The grants made by New Hampshire, under which most of the early settlements were made, were commonly six miles square and divided among sixty-eight grantees. The system of granting equal, small, unit areas fostered a spirit of independence and equality in the owners. The New York grants were, as we have seen, of unequal size and shape. Many

¹Hall: Early History of Vermont, p. 59-60.

²Vermont Historical Society Collections, Vol. I, p. 344.

of them were large areas granted to a single person, who in some cases engaged tenants to develop his land. The proprietor might make his survey in such a manner as to include the best land in a given vicinity. He might, if he chose, lay out a strip including the fertile intervalles on both sides of a stream, thus working an injustice in the distribution of desirable land, cutting off the back lands, and delaying settlement of adjoining areas. This system was incompatible with the typical New England system of equal areas, and further complicated the situation with regard to land titles.

The outbreak of the Revolutionary war put a stop to further grants by either New Hampshire or New York, but the confusion resulting from the conflicting claims lasted thru the entire period of settlement. In fact, it is probably true that the great controversy which grew out of the desirable character of the region, and its position in regard to neighboring colonies, was the greatest single factor in retarding settlement in Vermont.

Another check to settlement, also connected with the position of the region, in its relation to the Champlain valley, was occasioned by the Revolutionary campaigns which took place in this quarter. The importance of the control of Fort Ticonderoga and Crown Point, was early recognized. With these posts in the hands of the British there was constant danger of invasion, not only of the territory of the New Hampshire Grants, but of the older New England settlements. Great alarm was felt in the settlements of the Otter Creek and Winooski valleys, and the scattered settlements of the Champlain valley. The people of Connecticut, realizing that their safety from attack from the north, lay in the capture of the Champlain forts, raised three hundred pounds to aid in the undertaking. They were agreed that the "people on the New Hampshire Grants were the most proper persons for this job."¹ The events of the spectacular taking of Fort Ticonder-

¹Crockett: History of Vermont, Vol. I, p. 424.

oga by Ethan Allen, and a force of about eighty men are not of importance in this discussion. Crown Point was taken a few days later, and for a time fear of British advance from these points was removed.

It is clear that the members of the Continental Congress were not aware of the importance of the Champlain valley posts. Shortly after the capture of Ticonderoga and Crown Point, Congress suggested removing the military stores and ordnance to the southern end of Lake George, where it was recommended that a post be established. There was a storm of protest from the New England colonies, and from New York, when the plan was made known. Benedict Arnold addressed a letter to the Continental Congress in which he said,

"There are about five hundred families to the northward of Ticonderoga, who, if it is evacuated, will be left to the mercy of the King's Troops and Indians to . . . whom a remove would be entire ruin, as they have large families and no dependence but a promising crop in the ground. I need not add to this, gentlemen, that Ticonderoga is the key of this extensive country and if abandoned . . . leaves a very extensive frontier open to the ravages of the enemy."¹

A Massachusetts patriot sent Congress a protest, in which he outlined the importance of holding Ticonderoga.

"This very pass of Ticonderoga is the post and spot where all this mischief [the advance of the enemy] may be withstood and arrested; . . . If they [Congress] intend defence, they must be unacquainted with the geography of the country, or never adverted to the matter."²

Congress was convinced of the strategic importance of the Champlain fortresses, and the plan for giving them up was abandoned. The feeling of insecurity in the western

¹Crockett: History of Vermont, Vol. I, p. 463.

²Ibid: p. 464.

settlements, however, continued. With the disastrous failure of the Canadian campaign, and the return to these posts of the Continental soldiers, discouraged, ill, lacking provisions and supplies adequate for defence, the sense of insecurity increased. The exposed position of the northern and western frontier settlements became intolerable, and most of these homes were abandoned. It has been estimated that:—

“Near three-quarters of the people on the west side of the Green Mountains were compelled to remove, and the rest were in great danger.”¹

The years following the Revolution until Vermont was admitted into the Union in 1791, were peaceful compared with the preceding years of settlement. But even this period, in which Vermont was an independent Republic, was troubled by boundary controversies incident to her application for independent statehood. These difficulties again were related to the position of the region. In a letter to General Washington written in 1781, Governor Chittenden, the first governor of Vermont, pointed out some of the difficulties that were due to the position of the state.

“It is the misfortune of this state,” he wrote, “to join on the province of Quebec and the waters of the Lake Champlain, which affords easy passage for the enemy to make a descent with a formidable army on the frontiers, and into the neighborhood of the several states of New York, New Hampshire and Massachusetts, who have severally laid claims in part or in whole, to this state, and who have used every art which they could devise to divide her citizens, to set congress against her, and finally to overturn the government and share its territory among them.”²

After the admission into the Union, conditions, for the first time since 1764, may be said to have been favorable for

¹Vermont Historical Society Collections, Vol. I, p. 384.

²Hall: Early History of Vermont, pp. 500-1.

settlement. The war of 1812, altho of such significance in its geographic relations to the political attitude of the people, and the status of commerce and trade, had little effect on settlement.

Such were the conditions which prevailed during the period of the settlement of the state. The next point for consideration is the rate at which settlement took place under these conditions. The rapidity with which grants were made cannot be taken as an indication of the rate at which settlement was accomplished. In many cases grants were unoccupied for a number of years. There were two general classes of applications for grants; those that were made by individuals who had seen or heard of the land and intended to settle on it, and those who sought grants as a means of speculation. Many towns granted under the first condition owned their early development to one man, who gathered about him a number of his neighbors and friends from his old home. In some cases the pioneer settler had made a clearing and started to improve the land before he had obtained the number of signers necessary for securing the grant.

There is ample evidence that in contrast to the comparative ease with which grants were obtained, settlement was a serious and difficult matter to accomplish. Town records show that proprietors' meetings were held repeatedly, sometimes for a number of years, before settlement was attempted. In many cases rights changed hands until few of the names of the original proprietors were left in the list. Still more frequently, few if any of the names of the original proprietors are found among those of the settlers of a given town. Many inducements were offered to prospective settlers. The proprietors raised money to have the grants surveyed and the plots marked out. The men who undertook this service were often given the choice of the lots, an additional amount of land, or were paid a stated sum. A premium of extra land, or superior site, was often extended to the one who should erect the first sawmill or grist mill, or

cut a road between certain points. The terms of the grants usually required a definite settlement within a given number of years in order that the titles might be maintained. Owing to the vicissitudes of the period of settlement, this provision was seldom enforced. All these facts are evidence of the difficulties which confronted the people when it came to the point of leaving their homes and friends, and undertaking the hardships and trials of pioneer life. The seriousness of the undertaking was emphasized by the troubled conditions outlined, which covered most of the period of settlement.

The rate at which settlement went forward from 1760 to 1790, when the first census was taken, cannot be definitely established. Some information can be gleaned from the histories of individual townships, but the records in these early years are scanty, and in only a few cases were the actual numbers of inhabitants recorded. In a report made to the King in 1772, Governor Tryon, of New York, gave the population of Cumberland and Gloucester counties as 4,667. Early historians estimate that about two thirds of the people living in the state were in these two counties, and set the whole population at about 7,000.¹ A report made to a committee of Congress by certain "Agents on the Part of Vermont" in 1781 estimated the population in that year to be 30,000. In 1790 the census established the population at 85,425.² The percentage of increase in the next ten years was 80.8. By 1810 the rate of increase for the decade had dropped to 41.1, and the next census showed a decided falling off, with the rate of increase only 8.3%. Scattered instances

¹Williams: History of Vermont, Ed. 1, 1794, pp. 410-11.

²Collins: History of Vermont, Appendix,—Table D. p. 299.

<i>Year</i>	<i>Population</i>	<i>Increase</i>	<i>Percent</i>	<i>Density per Square mile</i>
1790	85,425			9.4
1800	154,465	69,040	80.0	16.0
1810	217,895	63,430	41.1	23.9
1820	235,981	18,086	8.3	25.8

of early settlers moving on to the Genesee valley are recorded as early as 1800, and the lowered rate of increase from 1810 to 1820 is probably largely due to emigration westward from Vermont.¹

The histories of different towns show that the time of settlement, and the increase in a given year, varied greatly with the location and the geographical conditions of the town. The settlement of Bennington, in southwestern Vermont, the first town granted by New Hampshire, was begun in 1760, in 1775 it was estimated to have a population of 1,500, in 1783, 2,000, and by the census of 1790 it had increased to 2,377. Local reports apparently were as prone to "pad" the census in those days as at present. A copy from an old paper published in Boston in 1791 gives the following account:

"Col. Samuel Robinson informs us that the 25th day of March, 1791, completed 30 years since the first stroke was struck by him towards clearing the first piece of land ever cultivated in Bennington. . . . The Col. has lived to see this town contain more than 4,000 inhabitants."²

Bennington was the first town in which the matter of titles was brought to a climax. Her citizens met the New York sheriff who came to enforce New York authority with stubborn resistance. This town became the leader of the towns of that vicinity in the New York controversy. Bennington also lay in the path of Burgoyne's campaign, and in 1777 the famous battle was fought here. But the town did not suffer in the matter of settlement under these two adverse conditions as much as some of the towns in the northwestern part of the state.

The town of Pittsford, on the Otter Creek, affords an example of the fact that the western towns, and those

¹Ibid: p. 299.

²New Hampshire State Papers, Vol. 26, Town Charters, Vol. III p 63

remote from the older settlement, suffered keenly under the disturbances of the war. The first family moved into Pittsford in 1768. In 1770, seven families came. Three came in each of the next two years. The town history says that:

"The year 1774 is marked by the arrival of a large number of new settlers. Some of these had been here sometime previously, made their pitches and commenced improvements. . . The commencement of the revolutionary struggle on the 19th of April, 1775, checked the tide of immigration which had so auspiciously commenced, so that during the next five years, the population of the township was but little increased by the arrival of new families."¹

The battle in Hubbardton, adjoining Pittsford on the west, caused the abandonment of the town in 1777. The settlers gathered up as many of their possessions as they could carry, and scattered to Rutland and other larger settlements. Many of them were able to return after a few days, but in most cases the women and children were sent back to their old homes to remain until the close of the war.

Some of the towns in the northwestern part of the state suffered still more severely because of their accessibility from the St. Lawrence and Lake Champlain, and their locations in the paths frequented by the Indians. The town of Jericho, on the Winooski River, lay on one of the most travelled of these trails. The town was chartered in 1763, but in 1774 when Bennington had more than a thousand inhabitants, there were only three families living in Jericho. In 1780 the little settlement was broken up by the Indians. The buildings were burned and the crops destroyed. One family was taken to Canada, and, so the history of the town maintains, "sold to the British officers and held as prisoners for three years."² In 1783 this family returned and began again on the ruins of the old home. In that year other former

¹Caverly: History of Pittsford, pp. 41, 58.

²Hayden: History of the Town of Jericho, p. 155.

settlers returned and settlement "increased rapidly."¹ This was a common experience in the Champlain Valley settlements during the Revolutionary period. There are numerous records of abandoned and destroyed homes, and of later returns by the former settlers to claim their land. This condition, of course, not only checked the growth of such settlement as had been established, but practically prohibited the opening of new lands.

The years following the close of the Revolution before the first census was taken, were apparently years of rapid settlement. This was especially true in the northern and western sections of the state, where settlement had been checked by the grant controversy and Revolutionary conditions.

A record of the historian of the town of Salisbury is illustrative of the condition which was common to many western towns of Vermont. This town was abandoned for three years during the Revolution:

"In 1785 and 1786," he writes, "the town and surrounding country was filled so rapidly by immigration, that in the spring of 1787 a great scarcity of breadstuffs was experienced. . . . It is true that there was no danger of absolute starvation, in a country abounding in wild animals, and in which the lakes and streams were filled with fish; . . . All men need bread. . . . Again, in the winter and spring of 1790, provisions became extremely scarce, especially all kinds of grain. . . . The great scarcity at this time was also for the most part attributed to the too rapid filling up of the country. The comparatively few who had made clearings and brought their land into a state of cultivation, were unable to raise provisions sufficient to sustain themselves and all those who were so constantly seeking to settle here, from the older states."²

The towns in the Connecticut valley, comparatively undisturbed by the controversy between New York and New

¹Hayden: History of the Town of Jericho, p. 190.

²Weeks: History of Salisbury, p. 246-7.

Hampshire, and out of range of the activities incident to the Revolutionary campaigns, show a more steady growth during these years. Newbury, in the Great Oxbow district on the Connecticut, settled in 1761, had a population of 873 in 1790, and of 1,304 in 1800. "About that time [1800] it began to be complained that the young men were 'going west,' which meant the valley of Lake Champlain and the Mohawk valley. Several, before 1810, had gone to Ohio, the frontier of civilization."¹

In summarizing the rate at which settlement took place, it is evident that the geographic factors of position with relation to other areas, as well as the topography of the region, are again effective. The Connecticut valley, operating as the most important route of entry, and removed from areas of outside disturbances was conspicuous for early settlements, and for steady growth in population. The Champlain valley, because of its strategic importance in the Revolutionary war, and its relation to New York claims, was settled later than the east and some sections of the southwest. Settlement here suffered from the interruptions which have been discussed, with resulting spasmodic and rapid increases in population. The mountainous interior was in general settled later than the margins, a natural consequence of its relative inaccessibility. At the same time, settlement here was accomplished at a comparatively steady rate, and was little disturbed by the controversies of the period. Many of the towns of the central mountain section received their charters from the state authorities in the years during which Vermont was virtually a republic.

CHAPTER III

SOURCES OF SETTLEMENT

A large majority of the settlers of Vermont came from the older settlements of the southern New England lowlands. A smaller percentage were natives of the adjacent areas of

¹Wells: Newbury, p. 128-9

New York and New Hampshire. In many cases the early settlers who came from New York or New Hampshire had either lived in southern New England, or were only one generation removed from that region, so that the kinship between these areas was close. A small population of French extraction was represented in some of the towns along the lower Champlain valley and the northern border of the state. This population largely came in from Canada and settled on tracts covered by old French claims which bordered the Misisquoi river, and the northeastern margin of Lake Champlain. In this section of the state there were also Dutch settlers from northern New York. In most cases these different elements were quickly assimilated by the New England population, but in a few towns their numbers were so large as to constitute distinct Dutch and French sections. A small number of Crown soldiers, discharged at the close of the French and Indian wars, took advantage of the land grants made by England as a reward for service, and established their residence in Vermont. Ryegate and Barnet, on the upper Connecticut, were the only towns in the state settled directly by people from outside of America. The Scots American Company, an association formed to select and purchase land for a colony, sent delegates to America in 1773. Thru the influence of a Scotch clergyman who had often visited in Newbury, they became interested in land in that vicinity. A purchase was made, and during the years 1774 and 1775 the towns of Ryegate and Barnet were settled largely by the Scotch. They were a fine, energetic people who took a prominent part in the affairs of the state, and made an impression upon the character of the population, especially along the upper Connecticut. Many Scotch family names still persist in Vermont. The population of the New England colonies from which most Vermont settlements came was English, Scotch and Irish in its origin, thus the only exceptions to the general makeup of the population were the small French and Dutch elements in the northern part of the state.

It was a striking fact in the earlier settled towns, that a large proportion of the population was made up of people from one community. This was true of the towns along the main highways into the region, where in general the earlier settlements were established. It was especially marked in towns on the Connecticut, West and Deerfield rivers in the southern part of the state. So large a share of the population in this vicinity came from Connecticut that the people regarded themselves as a "New Connecticut," and this name was for a time applied to Vermont. The rule of a common source did not hold in the case of the towns along the Champlain highway. This was partly due to the fact that settlement here was delayed by boundary controversies and the Revolutionary campaigns, and that the land titles passed thru many hands. As settlement advanced, population drifted from older to newer towns and became more mixed as far as sources were concerned. Thus the towns of central Vermont in the mountainous, less accessible section of the state, which were in general settled later than those in the margins, had populations made up of groups from a number of different sources. The common problems of their adjustment to the mountain environment, and the comparative isolation drew these people into a close association, and developed their sense of independence. Secure in their position in the interior, they were not as deeply involved in the boundary controversies as the border settlements. The central, mountain region with its united settlements, thus furnished a nucleus toward which the border settlements might turn, when outside disturbances threatened to overwhelm them. Vermont leaders, fighting for independent statehood, appreciated the refuge which the central highland afforded. In a letter to Congress in 1780, Ethan Allen wrote:

"I am as resolutely determined to defend the Independence of Vermont as Congress are that of the United States, and rather than fail, will retire with hardy Green Mountains Boys into the des-

olate caverns of the mountains, and wage war with human nature at large."¹

Opposing forces from without the state thus emphasized the feeling of unity within it, and turned the attention of the people upon themselves. So strong was their sense of individuality, that when partition of the region threatened, it overcame weight of kinship to adjoining states, and the people stood practically as a unit for the maintenance of a separate commonwealth.

There were various reasons why the settlers who came to Vermont left their old homes. Emigration from the New England colonies constituted a part of the westward expansion of the northwestern frontier, a result of the natural tendency to expansion which in this region had been retarded by the French and Indian wars. The pioneer instinct was strong in these frontier people, and as they saw the lands about them taken up, and the population increasing, they felt the desire to push out into new, open areas. There was little if any, desirable land unoccupied in southern New England at the period of the settlement of Vermont. The soils in some of the lowland sections, particularly eastern Connecticut, were comparatively poor. These causes for emigration were less applicable in the case of New Hampshire and New York. In both these areas there were desirable unsettled lands, moreover in New York available, rich lands lay to the west, the direction in which emigration tended. These reasons for emigration which were related to the position of the colonies on the frontier, were supplemented by the unrest incident to the troubled times which existed during the period of the settlement of Vermont. The years immediately following the Revolution were particularly difficult ones for the United States. The status of the young Republic among the nations was uncertain; the National government was struggling under a burden of debts; and taxes were heavy. The

¹Vermont Historical Society Collections, Vol. II, p. 105.

disbanded soldiers constituted a restless, unorganized element in the population. It was a period which fostered emigration from the settled regions.

Among the factors which operated to draw immigration into Vermont, probably the most effective was the propinquity of the region to settled areas, and the comparatively easy routes which led from them into Vermont. The Connecticut river served as a great highway into the region. Along it and its tributaries the settlers travelled in canoes and rafts in the summer, and drove sledges on the ice in the winter. Lake George and Lake Champlain rendered similar facilities for settlement in the west and north. Trails were blazed thru the woods connecting with the water ways, or near the banks of streams too small and rapid for navigation. Along these trails the settlers made their way on foot or on horseback. Oxen were often used to draw sledges when the journey was made on the ice. It was a common practice for men to locate their "pitches," as the lots of land were called, and clear and work the land for a number of seasons before actual settlement was made, returning to their homes for the winter. The connection with the old homes was thus very close. Each season additional supplies were carried to the new settlement, until gradually the home was established and the family took up its permanent abode. As settlement advanced the older communities within the state took the place of those outside as winter quarters for pioneers, as step by step the new lands were occupied. These migrations were not without hardship and discomfort; the way sometimes lay thru almost unbroken forest; but the distances between settlements were comparatively short, and there was a freedom from the uncertainty, and complete change of environment which characterized later, more extended, westward migrations. The pioneers for the most part were young people, who left their old homes to establish themselves in a region which should afford them and their children a larger share of prosperity than was theirs in the older colonies.

The natural advantages which the area afforded for settlement were well known. There was abundant testimony from the soldiers who had travelled across the region, of its fertile "intervales",¹ its abundantly forested hills, and numerous springs and streams. They commented on the varieties of excellent timber, and the rich soils. They noted the luxuriant forage, and the satisfactory results in crops which the French and Indians obtained on their clearings. They knew in a vague way that building stone was abundant. From their own experiences in their travels, they appreciated the value of hunting and fishing in the state. A Vermont historian writing in 1794 gave the following account of the land.

"The land included within these limits, is of a very fertile nature, fitted for all the purposes and productions of agriculture. The soil is deep, and of a dark colour; rich, moist, warm and loamy. It bears corn and other kinds of grain, in large quantities, as soon as it is cleared of wood, without any ploughing or preparation: And after the first crops, naturally turns to rich pasture or mowing."²

The ways in which the natural advantages operated as attractions to settlement will later become evident in an examination of the distribution of population, and the selection of sites for settlement.

Another inducement to settlement in Vermont lay in the comparatively easy terms under which land could be obtained. Under the New Hampshire system of grants, lands were secured with the provision that the grantee should pay a rent of one ear of Indian corn annually for ten years. And ten years from the date of the grant, one shilling proclamation

¹Thompson: History of Vermont, 1842, pp. 6-7. "We use it [word *intervale*]. notwithstanding, because it will express our meaning more. . . . intelligibly to the greater part of our readers, than any other we could employ. . . . It denotes those alluvial flats, lying along the margins of streams, which have been, or occasionally are overflowed in consequence of the rising of the water."

Williams: History of Vermont, Ed. I, p. 21-22.

money for every hundred acres he owned. The terms also stated that the grantee should plant and cultivate five acres of land within five years, for every fifty acres contained in his share.¹ These terms were not strictly enforced even while the jurisdiction of New Hampshire was undisputed, and they of course became void when the New York boundary was fixed at the Connecticut. The terms imposed by the New York government were more difficult. There appears to have been no exact system established; the governors drove the best bargain they were able to make with the grantees in the matter of fees paid for grants. They attempted to collect from settlers who had obtained New Hampshire grants and in a few cases the demands were met, but in general they were refused. In 1766 the settlers on the New Hampshire grants appointed an agent to the King to lay before him the case of the New York demands. They stated that when they applied to New York for a confirmation of their New Hampshire charters, New York charged fees at the rate of twenty-five pounds New York money, which was equal to fourteen pounds sterling for every thousand acres of land, besides a quit-rent of two shillings and six-pence sterling fore very hundred acres.² This controversy over the New York claims, as has been pointed out, delayed settlement, but it did not materially increase the price of lands to the settlers, because in general they refused to pay the charges.

In 1777 the settlers on the New Hampshire grants met in convention at Windsor and declared themselves a free and independent state. Two years later the governor and council and assembly of Vermont resolved "that it would 'make grants of all, or any part of the unappropriated lands within their jurisdiction' that would not interfere with any former grants."³ It was to the interest of Vermont in these years in which she was fighting for her independence, to increase her population

¹New Hampshire State Papers, Vol. 26, Town Charters, Vol. III, p. 584

²Ibid: p. 592.

³Vermont Historical Society, Collections, Vol. II, p. 30.

as rapidly as possible. To further this end the lands were offered to prospective settlers on easy terms. The form of the grant adopted by the Vermont government was much like that of New Hampshire. The towns were six miles square, containing 75 rights or lots. The prices charged for lots were not uniform, but were in some cases as low as seven or ten cents an acre.

In addition to the attractions which Vermont had to offer in the way of cheap, desirable lands, easily reached from the neighboring colonies, there were political and financial advantages. Since the state was not a member of the Federation, participation in the Revolution was voluntary, and connections with the federal government unofficial. This meant freedom from war debt, and the heavy burden of taxation which the older states suffered at the close of the war. Thrown on their own resources by the conflicting claims of New York, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts, and refused admission to the Union as a separate state, the citizens of Vermont rapidly developed independence and statesmanship. For fourteen years, from 1777 to 1791, Vermont maintained her position of independence. During that time government was effectively and economically administered by the Governor and Council of Safety. There was no irredeemable paper money to complicate the financial situation; the income from the sale of lands which the state carried on, helped to pay the expenses of government; and taxation was light. These advantages which attracted settlers to Vermont are indirectly geographic, since the conditions which produced them grew out of the position of the state in relation to its neighbors.

CHAPTER IV

THE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

Geographic factors largely determined the distribution of population in Vermont. The routes of entry which played so large a part in making the region known, and which facilitated

settlement when conditions were conducive to it, were equally effective in determining the location of settlements. Population naturally spread along the highways of the region. The matter of communication between settlements was of great importance in the pioneer stage of development. Older settlements served as stepping stones to new ones, and the lonely pioneers depended upon each other for the exchange of various supplies of food, seed for planting and tools.

The Connecticut river and its tributaries, Lake Champlain and the streams flowing into it, and the trails connecting these waterways, thus attracted settlement along their borders. The routes which were followed in the early journeys across the state were largely the lines of Indian trails, since most of the travel in the period before settlement was made either by captives taken to Canada by the Indians, or by soldiers engaged in the French and Indian wars. The base of Indian operations was in southern Canada, and advances came both from the northeast and the northwest. In general the routes from the west as well as from the east led to the Connecticut river. These trails figured in the distribution of population, in that sections of them became much travelled roads for the settlers, and because in following them various individuals noted particular natural advantages along the way, which influenced them in the selection of sites for settlement.

One of the most travelled of these early routes which became a permanent road, followed an old trail in part. This was known as the Military, or Crown Point Road. It extended from Fort Number Four on the Connecticut, just opposite the mouth of the Black river, to Crown Point. The Indians ascended Lake Champlain, followed the Otter Creek to rapids in the stream, thence by trail to the height of land, and down the east side of the hills to either West or Black river, which they followed to the Connecticut. This route was frequently followed by the Indians, and was probably the best known to the early settlers. It came to be called the

"Indian Road." In 1759 General Amherst had a company of New England troops with him at Crown Point, who had come by way of the Hudson and Lake George. It was evident that the campaign against the Indians in this quarter could be more effectively waged if troops and supplies could be transported across the state of Vermont from southern New England. Accordingly the government of Massachusetts projected a plan for building such a road. It was designed to extend from Charlestown, Number Four, New Hampshire, to Crown Point, following in part the "Indian Road." In the summer of 1759 the work was begun. A wagon road was cut from Crown Point to the Otter Creek, and a bridal path cut across the mountains. The next year the road was begun at Number Four and extended along the Black river to meet the point at which the work of the previous year stopped. New Hampshire troops passed over this road to Crown Point. Their supplies were carried in wagons as far as the road permitted, and then transferred to horses. A drove of cattle was driven from Number Four to Crown Point for the use of the army, the summer after the completion of the road.

This road had a distinct effect on the location of settlements. It passed thru the fertile valley of the Otter Creek, which was a region of great charm to the soldiers who followed it. The road also formed a connecting link with the older settlements on the Connecticut. The town of Pittsford grew up on this road at the point easiest to ford the Otter Creek. Springfield at the junction of the Black and Connecticut rivers was crossed by the Military Road, and probably grew up here because of it. An historian of the town asserts that settlement was directly connected with the Crown Point Road, and that of twenty-six families in the town in 1772, most of them were settled along the road. "Besides the conveyance of troops and supplies," he says, "the roads for the first time opened up the State to settlers. New and fertile land tempted the soldier to return and bring others

to make a settlement along the road."¹ The fertile stretches in the valleys along this road are constantly referred to in the description of this route.

There is probably no attraction for sites for settlement, to which more frequent reference is made in the journals, diaries, and histories of early writers on Vermont, than these fertile stretches bordering the streams, which they call "intervalles." A number of these intervalles had been cleared and cultivated by the Indians previous to the coming of white settlers. There has been a great deal of discussion among historians, in regard to the extent to which residence by the Indians took place on Vermont soil. It has been generally conceded that the state was a battle ground first of all, a contested hunting and fishing ground, and that there were few attempts at residence on the part of the rival tribes. Recent authorities are inclined to the opinion that the extent to which Indians occupied the territory has been underestimated.² Remnants of ancient burial sites are known in several parts of the state. Relics of rude implements, pottery, and flint are found in great numbers in various localities. The most extensive Indian settlement known was in the town of Swanton, on the Missisquoi river, a few miles south of the Canadian boundary line. The Indians, like the white settlers who followed them, in many instances, sought the intervalles for cultivation.

Reference has already been made to the best known of these cleared sections. It lay on the upper Connecticut at the Great Oxbow, or Coos section: "A locality . . . known to be desirable to the settler as having the advantage of containing a strip of cleared intervalle along the river, which had previously been occupied and cultivated—in the Indian fashion—by a small body of Indians of the St. Francis tribe."³ This region was one of the first selected for settlement. The town

¹Hubbard and Horace: *History of Springfield*, p. 29.

²Crockett: *History of Vermont*, Vol. I, p. 64.

³Goddard and Partridge: *History of Norwich*, p. 10.

of Newbury grew up at this point. "At the mouth of the La Plotte River, in Shelburne, a square field of about twenty-five acres had been cleared and cultivated before the coming of the white men."¹ It was natural that these cleared areas should be chosen for early settlement. A few had been temporarily occupied by the French, especially in the vicinity of Middlebury, on the shores of Lake Champlain. The cleared *intervalles*, however, were few compared with those to which reference is made in accounts of settlement, and which had to be cleared for cultivation. The forest was the great obstacle to the settler, but the newly cleared land was highly productive. Corn was often planted among the stumps, as soon as the first trees had been felled. Even making due allowance for the popular idea that the soil of New England is rocky and sterile, and discounting the enthusiastic accounts of various town historians, there is overwhelming evidence to the effect that Vermont was regarded by the early settlers as a region which would richly reward their efforts at settlement. They describe the country as pleasantly diversified by broad valleys and gently rolling uplands—with wide and fertile *intervalles*,—and soil of a rich and mellow loam, and very productive, well watered by clear streams.²

Another type of *intervale* which is frequently cited as a factor in the selection of settlement sites was the "beaver meadow." It is evident that beavers were very plentiful in Vermont in this early period. The French and Indians referred to the region as a "beaver hunting ground." The names Beaver brook, Beaver meadow, and Beaver pond are still used in many places in Vermont. Any clearing in the almost unbroken forest of Vermont was welcomed as a possible site for settlement, and these beaver meadows were frequently cleared for cultivation. One of the most extensive which is described by an early settler, lay on the eastern bank

¹Crockett: *History of Vermont*, Vol. I, p. 59.

²Goddard and Partridge: *History of Norwich*, p. 21.

of the Otter Creek. A stretch of several acres of land was covered with shallow water, because of the obstruction of a beaver dam. The settler, who had come from Greenwich, Massachusetts, in search of a location for a new home, applied for a grant of this land, because he believed it could be drained and converted into a fruitful field.¹ The next year he returned with his two sons, and took up his residence at this place.

The part which the numerous streams of Vermont played in the distribution of population can hardly be over estimated. Aside from the fact that there were lands suitable for cultivation along their margins, and that trails followed the courses of those which were not navigable, they furnished sites for sawmills and grist mills, and abounded in fish. The matter of transportation was of primary importance. The Connecticut served as a road between settlements along its banks even after roads had been cut thru the woods. Not only did settlers come in on the river, but the transportation of passengers and merchandise came to be such that a regular transportation trade was carried on from the earlier settled towns to the younger towns. A ferry business was established between Newbury, one of the early towns on the upper Connecticut, and Haverhill on the New Hampshire side of the river. "Charters for ferries were sometimes granted by the New Hampshire legislature, and sometimes the towns on both sides of the river permitted some one to keep a ferry."² In winter time the lakes and large streams were veritable paths in the wilderness. There are numerous accounts of the transportation in sledges drawn on the ice, of families and household goods.

In the selection of sites on the waterways, several factors were taken into consideration. Falls and rapids, which were interruptions to navigation, furnished an attraction as power sites. Almost the first necessity, as will become evident

¹Caverly: *History of Pittsford*, p. 27.

²Wells: *History of Newbury*, p. 306.

in a discussion of the pioneer life, was the erection of a mill for grinding corn. The presence of a mill in a certain region drew settlers that way—and thus acted as an attraction for the settlement. The historian of Enosburg, a town in the northwestern part of the state, points out the fact “that at least four of the seven villages or hamlets of the town owe their existence to the development of the water privileges offered by the Missisquoi and the branch.”¹

While the abundance of fish to be found in the lakes and streams was an important item of food for the early settlers, there are few evidences that sites for settlement were chosen particularly because of good fishing grounds. Probably this is true because there was such an abundance of fish available. There were, however, a few instances where fishing was so important as to become an industry. At the “Great Falls” of the Connecticut, in the southern part of the state, there was a favorite fishing field for the Indians. This spot, according to some accounts, was still frequented by Indians when white men first came into the Connecticut valley.² Bellows Falls in the township of Rockingham, grew up at the Great Falls. An historian of Rockingham, says “the attention of the first settlers was principally directed to fishing for salmon and shad, which were then taken in great abundance at Bellows Falls. For this reason agriculture was, for many years, much neglected and the settlement advanced very slowly.”³

Altho clearing his land was the greatest task the pioneer had to undertake in connection with settlement, he did not look upon the forest altogether as his enemy. There are indications that sites for settlement were chosen with considerable regard for the character of the forest stand. In seeking homes the settlers often selected regions of fine hard wood, and noted the fine yellow pine. It is recorded that in the year 1733 seventy men came from New London, Connecticut, to a

¹Aldrich: Franklin and Grand Isle Counties, Enosburgh, p. 432.

²Crockett: History of Vermont, Vol. I, p. 46.

³Hayes: History of Rockingham, p. 25.

section known as the "Great Meadow" in the town of Putney, to "to cut timber" from the magnificent growth of yellow pines which occupied that portion of the Connecticut river valley, "a shipload of it was prepared." Partly on the strength of the report of the presence of this fine timber, Massachusetts settlers took up their abode in this section.¹

There is also frequent reference among the reports of early settlers, to the presence of building stone, but it is doubtful if the location was the direct cause of settlement in any particular section.

In spite of the fact that the mills and intervale clearings necessarily lay in the valleys, there was an apparent tendency for the homes to be built on the higher land. There may have been several reasons for this fact. It is probable that in some instances sites on the hillsides were selected because the forest stand was lighter than in the valleys, or the soil less damp and heavy. Roads were constructed with great difficulty to those hillside dwellings, and it is often a puzzle to the traveller in rural Vermont today, to account for the location of many abandoned farms in the relatively inaccessible uplands. There may have been something of a desire on the part of the pioneer to be up where he could look out across the country which separated him from his neighbor, and where the sunlight lingered a little longer than in the heavily wooded valley. The effectiveness of various geographic factors varies with changing conditions. Decreasing forest cover, increasing population, improved roads, and the introduction of modern conveniences, have made the reasons for the early locations of settlements inconspicuous. The same changed conditions make it evident to the observer that instead of the little streams whose wayside mills have fallen into decay, the presence of good roads and the accessibility of railroads count in the location and growth of cities and towns. Differences in the quality of the soil has largely taken the place of the problem of the density of the forest stand, and the presence of

¹Crockett: History of Vermont, Vol. I. p. 162.

marble, granite and talc deposits play a greater part than in the days when the first settlers were selecting sites for their homes.

CHAPTER V.

ADJUSTMENT TO FRONTIER CONDITIONS

The story of the pioneer life of the settlers of Vermont is, on its economic side, an account of the utilization of natural resources by a group of courageous, resourceful, and capable people. The nature of the roads or paths, over which they journeyed to their new homes, prohibited the bringing of many personal or household effects. In the absence of many of the comforts to which they had been accustomed, they learned to adapt themselves to frontier conditions, and to meet each day's experiences with courage and composure.

There were various modes of transportation on these early journeys. The true pioneers, those men who came, sometimes alone and sometimes in a company of two or three, to select sites for their homes before bringing their families, often travelled on foot, making their way along streams, and thru the unbroken forests, carrying their necessities in packs on their backs. Sometimes these journeys were made on horseback, when it was frequently necessary to cut a way into the wilderness. As the number of settlements increased, many of these paths became well marked, and wide enough to accomodate rude vehicles called "drags" which were drawn by horses. There are some accounts of the use of ox carts as modes of conveying supplies. The lakes and larger streams made the journey easier for the settler who could utilize them. Many came into the district about Lake Champlain, and also that along the Connecticut valley, by boats in summer, and sleighs in winter. Canoes were frequently used on the smaller streams. These often had to be carried around falls and rapids.¹

¹Lovejoy: History of Royalton, p. 59.

A few treasured house furnishings, cooking utensils, cloth, tools, and seed for the first planting, made up the luggage of these pioneer travellers. They depended largely on hunting and fishing for food along the way, and a thicket of evergreen boughs formed a simple shelter for the night. In many cases cows were brought with the original party, but more often the men of a certain district banded together and agreed upon some of their number to make a special journey to drive the cattle and hogs to the new settlements. Cows were so important for dairy purposes, and hogs so few, that any meat except game was a luxury in the early period of settlement. But venison and bear meat were plentiful.

The first task which lay at the hand of the pioneer was the construction of a shelter. A rough log hut with a dirt floor, or one of split logs, and windows and door closed by skins or blankets, was the usual form of dwelling. This was gradually improved as the man of the house had time to spare from his chief work—that of making a clearing for his crops. Trees were felled at once, and at the proper season seed was planted among the stumps. Corn was usually the first crop. The newly turned soil was in most cases very fertile, and responded with an abundant harvest. A pioneer of Middlebury, in the Champlain valley, kept a record of his first planting among the fallen trees. It was made on the tenth of June, and by the tenth of August the ears were ready for roasting.¹ Sometimes the corn was caught by an early frost, before the ears were mature enough to serve for seed for the next season. This was a real calamity to the settler, and he was in consequence obliged to walk miles to replace his supply of seed, bringing it in a sack on his back. Corn was the chief article of food for the settlers in the first years of settlement, and in many cases the only grain raised the first season in the new home. It was dried, pounded, and made into pudding which was served with milk. Baked, it served as bread, in the form of the New England “Johnny-cake.”

¹Swift: Middlebury, p. 197.

Before grist mills were built, or when the distance to the nearest one was too great to be travelled, the pioneers ground their corn in a plumping mill. This was made by hollowing out a hard wood stump, and attaching a stone, or some other weight to a sapling which hung over the stump. The corn was put in the stump and pounded by the swinging up and down of the stone. The sapling served as a spring to help lift the stone. The demand for grist mills was so great that rewards of land were sometimes offered to those who would build them. Meetings of the proprietors of certain grants were held before the journey to the land was undertaken, in which it was voted to insure the building of a grist mill. The proprietors of Arlington, in southwestern Vermont, who came from Connecticut, "Voted to give fifty acres of land to anyone who would set up a grist mill. Remember Baker (who became one of the leaders in western Vermont) built a grist mill and sawmill, accepting this offer."¹ In supplying this need the Vermont settlers were especially favored by the abundance of two great natural resources, forests and water power. This advantage becomes very evident when compared with the difficulties under which the pioneers of the Middle West migration labored, to a great extent, lacking these two resources. In almost every part of Vermont timber suitable for building was readily available, and water-power sites were numerous. It was necessary, however, in the years before manufacturing was developed in Vermont, to obtain the saw and the iron crank which propelled it, from the older settlements. There are many accounts of the journeys that were made to bring saws and cranks to the newly erected mills. The saw and crank for a mill erected at Newbury in 1764 were brought from Concord, New Hampshire. A sled was built to haul them over the snow and ice to the settlement, and several of the settlers undertook the errand on snowshoes. They encountered some very cold weather, and nearly perished from exposure.

¹Hemenway: Vermont Historical Gazetteer, Vol. I., p. 122.

This crank. . . did service some twenty years in the first sawmill in town. It was then transferred, . . . and outlasted several mills until 1871, the last survivor of the old "up and down" saw mill went into decay. The crank is still preserved. It weighs one hundred and seventy-five pounds.¹

With the increase in the acreage cleared, the variety of crops which the settlers raised was increased. Wheat followed corn as an early crop. White flour was considered a luxury. An early historian says of the pioneers:

"Their leading idea was to grow wheat both for home use and with which to pay for their land. Brought up on the brown bread of old Connecticut, they hoped by coming here to indulge in the wheaten loaf. . . Most of the newly cleared fields produced wheat in rich luxuriance."²

Forty bushels was considered a good crop from an acre of new land, tho the average crop was only about twenty-four bushels. One pioneer in the year 1791 raised "seven hundred bushels of wheat from a little less than thirty acres of new land, and . . . one acre was known to yield over forty-three bushels."³

Oats, barley, rye, and buckwheat were soon added to the list of grains. A greater variety of crops was grown than at the present time, since the settler depended largely on his own acres for supplies. Seed was exchanged between settlements. Charlestown, New Hampshire, where the Fort Number Four was located, was one of the chief centers of exchange for central and eastern Vermont in the early years. Buckwheat was valued for the supply of honey which it furnished to the beekeeper. Flax was an important crop. Hemp and tobacco were raised to a slight extent. Hay was abundant in most sections.

¹Wells: Newbury, pp. 33-34.

²Hollister: History of Pawlet, p. 54-55.

³Weeks: Salisbury, p. 70.

Each family had a garden where peas, beans, pumpkins, turnips, beets, carrots and other vegetables were raised. Potatoes were introduced early, and became a valuable crop. They were raised in Newbury in 1762, the first year of settlement, from seed brought from Concord, New Hampshire. Potatoes were supposed to have been introduced into New England by Irish immigrants in 1719.

“‘So late as 1750’ says Coffin’s history of Newbury, Mass., ‘should any person have raised so large a quantity as five bushels, great would have been the inquiry among his neighbors, in what manner he could dispose of such abundance.’ They were first raised in beds like onions. Yet little more than ten years later their use had become general.”¹

The settlers found a great variety of native berries in Vermont. The wild strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, cherries, and in some sections blueberries, and cranberries, were valued additions to the diet. The historian of Salisbury says that the cranberry bush “is found in all our swamps, and when transferred to the garden flourishes in a remarkable manner.”² Wild cherries were used to flavor rum. Frost grapes were used in pickles. The native berries and fruits were soon supplemented by varieties brought from the older settlements. The settlers, many of whom came from Connecticut “where fruit was raised in great abundance,”³ naturally made an effort to establish orchards as soon as possible. There were some attempts at planting seed before the family came to settle, just as in some instances the first corn was planted in advance of settlement. Apples, plums, pears, and certain varieties of grapes were raised very successfully, but the climate was not adapted to the growing of peach and quince

¹Wells: History of Newbury, p. 35.

²Weeks: Salisbury, p. 85.

³Ibid: p. 89.

trees. Apples were extensively used for cider, and the various fruits were dried for winter use.

Sugar was to be had in abundance, in the form of maple sugar and of honey. White sugar was a rare luxury, brought in in small quantities with the strictly limited supplies which could be transported. "Bee trees" were frequently found, containing an abundance of honey. "It was not uncommon for an expert hunter to find several swarms in a single day, each yielding from twenty to eighty and sometimes a hundred pounds of strained honey."¹ Bees were kept in hives which required the smothering of the bees to collect the honey, and this practice resulted in the gradual decline in the number of bees. Maple sugar was made every spring. Vermont has always been justly famous for the production of maple sugar. The early settlers found it a valuable asset in their larders, and with the increase of population, and improved transportation, an item of commerce. The close of the "sugaring" season was often made a holiday time, and widely scattered neighbors came together for a "sugaring off"—a festival which is still held in rural Vermont. To one who has participated in a real "sugaring off", it is a never-to-be-forgotten experience. The fragrant boiling syrup which is poured on the huge pans of white, hardpacked snow, the platters piled high with crisp, brown doughnuts, the pickles, and butternuts, contribute to a "feast fit for the gods."

Another article of food which the forests furnished the settler was a variety of nuts. Butternuts, hazelnuts, and beech-nuts were plentiful. The butternut is a particularly rich and delicious nut, and was sometimes used in bread, ground with flour. Beechnuts and acorns were fed to hogs. In the fall, after the first frosts when the nuts fell, hogs were turned into the woods to feed on them. There are certain accounts of the hogs having been left to care for themselves thru the winter in this way. In view of the severe cold, and the

¹Weeks: Salisbury, pp. 103-107.

heavy snows common to Vermont, it would seem that this probably was not a common practice.

The flax was an important product of the early days. For about the first fifty years of settlement in Vermont most of the cloth used was made in the home. The women of the household became very proficient in weaving and spinning, and there was much rivalry among experts, to produce the most beautiful patterns, and the finest materials.

It was the ambition of each community to have enough sheep to furnish wool for the homespun clothes. The pioneers had some difficulty in keeping sheep because of the danger from wolves. It was a common experience on a winter morning, to find wolf and bear tracks in the snow about the cabins. And it was often necessary to build strong pens to insure the cattle and sheep from attack. Wool became one of the principal items of commerce, as will be made evident in a discussion of the trade of the region. Dye for the cloth woven was made from butternut bark, and nearly every household afforded indigo dye for coloring the "linsey woolsey."

During the long winters when there was little that could be done in improving the land, attention was turned to the dwelling, and to increasing the number of conveniences for the household needs. Tubbs, chairs, and benches were built of bark and saplings. Wooden dishes, . . . bowls for the hasty pudding, and basins in which to "set" the milk . . . were carved out of poplar or pine which had been sawed into smooth pieces. The wooden troughs which were inserted into the maple trees to catch the sap, were made ready for the spring sugar season. There were almost innumerable tasks to which the resourceful settler turned his hand. It is not difficult to picture the family of the settler as they were gathered in the rough cabin on a winter day—each one busy with some task for the common good—the women with weaving and spinning, or preparing their simple meal, and the men with knives and saws making some article of furniture. Perhaps the thoughts of all turned to the old homes from which they had come, and they longed

for news of their former neighbors and friends. But always they looked forward with courage and hopefulness to the spring, and the compensations which the future would bring them as a reward of their patient labor. Nor was the winter entirely without its own compensations. It must have been a satisfaction to the pioneer to hear his axe ring out on a clear winter morning, as he extended his clearing, and piled the logs to be burned, carefully saving the ashes for potash, which were prized as a source of income. It is probable that even in his absorption in his task, he was not entirely oblivious to his surroundings. The beauty of the stretch of rolling country marked by patches of dark evergreens which stood out against the snow, and the mountains sharply outlined against a blue sky, must have made him feel that his lot was cast in pleasant places.

The number and variety of industries increased with the development of the region. In the early stages of the home manufacture of clothing skins and furs were used for moccasins, mittens, and coats. Deer were numerous, and otter, mink, sable, raccoon, and muskrat were found in considerable numbers. The beaver had generally disappeared at the time of the settlement of the state. Otter and sable also soon practically disappeared, but mink, raccoon, and muskrat are still found in Vermont. The Pawlet town record says that the last beaver known in that vicinity was killed in 1800.¹ An account is given in the chronicles of Shoreham of a soldier who served in the French and Indian wars, and who stayed in the vicinity of the lake hunting. "The winter of 1765 he spent in Shoreham, in a hut constructed of pine and hemlock boughs, without seeing a human being for six months, during which he caught 70 beavers."² At first the settlers treated their own leather, but tanneries were soon introduced, and nearly every community had one or more. These were often very crude

¹Hollister: Pawlet, p. 87.

²Hemenway Historical Gazetteer of Vermont, Vol. I, p. 97.

affairs. One is described as having "vats . . . on the flat near the brook, without any covering aside from a few loose boards thrown over them, and covered with tan bark in winter to keep them from freezing."¹ With the introduction of tanneries, and the improvement in leather, shoemaking became an important trade. The travelling shoemaker was a figure in the early settlements. He came to live in the home while he set up his bench and made shoes for the entire family. Later shoe shops were opened as settlements grew to the establishment of villages.

With the abundance of timber that was at hand in Vermont, it was natural that wood using industries would be early developed. The crude home manufacture of wooden dishes, furniture, and implements, gave way to the cooperage trade. Cooper's tools were brought from the older settlements. Four years after the first settlement made in the town of Newbury, a settler from Norwich, south of Newbury, "having tools for cooperage made pails and tubs and as soon as the river was sufficiently frozen, put them on a handsled, and drew them to Newbury on the ice and exchanged them for corn."² Pails and tubs were in great demand for various household uses, and particularly for sap and syrup containers in connection with the maple sugar harvest, and also for the shipment of potash.

A large majority of the settlers of Vermont, as has been pointed out in the discussion of the sources of settlement, were of English descent. In one early chronicle it is asserted that

"A large proportion of our early settlers were skilled mechanics, and were trained under the old English law that prescribed seven years' apprenticeship."³

It is uncertain to what extent this was true, but all records bear witness to the fact that there were many skillful workers

¹Aldrich: Franklin and Grand Isle Counties, Richford, p. 462

²Goddard and Partridge: History of Norwich, p. 27.

³Hollister: History of Pawlet, p. 62.

among the people of this time. Certainly they were worthy inheritors of the natural resources which were theirs to utilize. Example of their wood and metal work are still here to bear witness for them, and much beautiful hand-woven linen, and many homespun bedspreads are cherished by their descendants.

Iron work was the next step after the development of cooperage, but even after facilities for various manufacture of iron had been established, a great deal of woodwork continued. Iron was for many years difficult to obtain, while wood was always plentiful. The first iron of which record has been found was supposed to have been brought from Massachusetts, where iron was worked very early. It was brought in boats up the Connecticut. After the manner of many other industries, forges were found in the home of the early settler. Here he turned out hand made nails for use in his improved house which followed in the wake of the sawmill. Larger forges were presently established, to which the work of the community was brought. Some native iron was mined and worked. The town records of a number of towns report iron ore mined. There is a record of iron works at Sheldon, in the northwestern part of the state, that were of considerable importance to the people of that vicinity. In 1799 a furnace and forge were built which did a prosperous business. More than a hundred men were said to have been employed getting out ore for this forge. "On account of the good business done by the furnace company, iron was long called 'Sheldon currency.'"¹ At an earlier date, 1785, large iron works were built at Fair Haven. The owner built a dam at the falls and petitioned "the General assembly of the state, which was then an independent sovereignty, to lay a duty of two pence per pound, on nails, to enable him to build his works and supply the state."²

¹Aldrich: Franklin and Grand Isle Counties, Sheldon, p. 620.

²Hemenway: Vermont Historical Gazetteer, Vol. I, p. 53; III, p. 699.

Mills with trip hammers and anvils for the manufacture of scythes, axes, and hoes were established. The names of many experts in these various lines are recorded in the town histories. Great pride was taken in turning out fine tools. Carding and fulling mills were introduced about the year 1800. Saw mills were constantly improved and enlarged. The lumber business increased and flourished beyond the immediate needs of the settlers. A few woolen mills were set up. A paper mill was built in Fair Haven in 1790. Paper manufactured in this mill is still in existence. The pulp wood industry increased in Vermont, but largely to supply paper mills in southern New England. Poplar which is used for paper pulp is still very plentiful in the state.

It is not possible to say just how extensively quarries were operated in the early days. A marble quarry was opened in Dorset in western Vermont, in 1785.¹ One in Middlebury, opened in 1803, claims to have been the first to do extensive marble manufacturing, and to have had the first machine for sawing marble that was operated in Vermont.² It is probable that granite was quarried at about the same time. It is likely that both marble and granite were used earlier than any recorded dates of their use. There is a record of "native granite" mill stones that were used in a mill originally erected for sawing in 1796.³ Slate quarries were also opened at an early date. There were many slate quarries, especially in the central part of the state, which were worked in a small way by the owners of the land on which they occurred. Lime-kilns were erected early, especially in the northern part of the state. Slate and limestone were used for the back stones of fireplaces and chimneys. With the improvement in building, brickyards were opened in different parts of the state, and lime was in great demand for making mortar. After

¹Hemenway: Vermont Historical Gazetteer, Vol. I, p. 189.

²Ibid: p. 189.

³Aldrich: Franklin and Grand Isle Counties, Richford, p. 452.

the opening of marble quarries, marble to some extent took the place of slate and limestone hearths and fireplace stones.

Occasionally there were rather unusual manufacturing industries of which accounts are given. "In 1811 a charter was granted by the legislature of the state for the manufacture of glass—on the western shore of Lake Dunmore. About 40 operators were employed in this factory several years."¹ The sand on the shore of Lake Dunmore was suitable for use in this product. Probably the reasons for the establishment of the factory at this time were that the character of building was improving, there was a demand for glass, and transportation of glass from outside was difficult.

The decade beginning at about the year 1780 seems to have been a time of rapid extension of the various early industries, and of great increase in the erection of mills and factories. During a part of this time, when some of the settlements were abandoned because of danger from British attack, those which were undisturbed were very active in the development of their resources. Vergennes, which is on the Otter Creek at a point seven miles from Lake Champlain, seems to have been typical of the period. "The active blast furnace, air furnace, rolling, grist, saw, and fulling mill, wire factory, and busy forges, clustered fast around this vast reservoir [the Falls of Vergennes] of water-power, and not less than 177 tons of shot, for the war, were cast here."²

CHAPTER VI.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT.

The development of the resources of Vermont, which advanced with the settlement of the state, established a basis for the growth of commerce and trade. Early trade was local in character, and dealt largely in those raw products

¹Weeks: Salisbury, p. 133.

²Hemenway: Vermont Historical Gazetteer, Vol. I, Vergennes, p. 106.

with which the settler was daily concerned in clearing his land and providing for his family. Furs and skins were items of considerable importance to the settler. The surplus over those needed for the manufacture of clothing in his own household was gathered annually and sold to fur dealers. Most of the furs thus collected were taken down the Connecticut to Massachusetts markets. As already stated, one of the the first manufactured products which constituted a source of revenue was potash. Because this simple manufacture went hand in hand with the clearing of the land, which was his first necessity, nearly every early settler had his crude ashery. When logs, which were not needed for lumber and fence rails, were burned, the ashes were saved and made into what was known as "salts" or "potash". The ashery consisted of a large iron kettle set over an arch. The ashes were leached and lye boiled to the state of potash. Like many of the other industries, the individual asherys were given up, as the population increased, and larger ones were established in the villages. Because of its slight weight and bulk, potash was one of the first products to be carried to market, and was one of the few marketable products for which the settlers obtained cash. This product sometimes called pearl ash or potash according to its quality, sold for from four to five dollars a hundred weight.¹ The production of potash naturally fell off as the settlements became established. It shortly became more profitable to turn the logs into lumber, or to sell logs to lumber companies, than to burn them for the manufacture of potash. By the early eighteen hundreds many asherys were abandoned.

This by-product of the forest thus gave way to the lumber industry. In fact, it is probably true that lumbering to a certain extent was carried on before and during the period of the greatest production of potash. There is some evidence that a certain amount of trade in lumber was carried on be-

¹Jones: Waitsfield, p. 168.

more actual settlement took place in Vermont, unless we count the early French attempts at occupation as settlement. The town of Swanton, on Lake Champlain, where the French held territory for a time, gives a record of early lumbering:

"A saw mill for manufacturing lumber (pine logs into plank and boards) was built in the days of the French settlement, some years prior to the French and Indian war. . . The enormous growth of white pine in this section, and the demand at Quebec, to which there was water communication, led to the erection of a sawmill here at so early a period."¹

When a company of settlers came into this region in 1789, they found hundreds of pine logs, many of which were still sound, piled beside the river. The mill was destroyed. Attention has already been called to the shipment of mast timber from eastern and central Vermont at an early period before settlement. In a number of Lake Champlain towns the lumber business, and allied industries, the making of potash, and wooden casks in which to ship it, led to the building of wharves and storehouses. From this section, from the towns of Georgia, Shelburne, Swanton, and others, the lumber trade was largely carried on with Quebec. Oak, Norway pine, and white pine were the principal kinds shipped. The timber was gotten out by the settlers in time they could spare from the other work on their land. Often a large number of people were concerned in the formation of a raft of lumber. It sometimes took a year to cut and raft the lumber to Quebec, and return to a Champlain port. Burlington was one of the more important lumber ports of this early period. Rafts rigged with sails, for use when the wind was favorable travelled with the current of the Sorel and the St. Lawrence. The first saw mill in the Burlington district was built by Ira Allen, at Winooski falls on the Onion river, and to it much of the timber was brought to be prepared for market. A number

¹Aldrich: Franklin and Grand Isle Counties, Swanton, p. 403.

of dealers in lumber went into business in rather a large way in Burlington, buying lumber for their rafts from the smaller producers. The first recorded raft of oak to be shipped from Burlington was dispatched in 1794, and the first one of Norway pine, in 1796. "In a few years a large trade in oak timber for ship building, Norway and white pine for masts and spars, square timber and deals sprang up."¹ Some of this material was used for the construction of ships within the state. Vergennes, on Otter Creek, boasted of having "facilities for ship-building. . . as good as any in the state. Here was fitted up the flotilla which the victorious McDonough commanded in Plattsburg Bay September 11, 1814."²

Incident to the lumber trade and the building of wharves and storehouses, was the development of a general store for barter and trade in small wares. Much of this trade was carried on across the border with the "Province," as the contiguous Canadian territory was locally called. The war of 1812 brought about certain developments in regard to this trade, which reveal in a striking manner the effects of geographical conditions on the political attitude of the people of this section of the state. It has been pointed out by an historian of this period, that altho the war of 1812 was waged largely in the defence of the rights of the maritime states, these states strongly opposed the war because it interfered with their maritime trade.

"In the opposition (to the war) was found all of New England, with the exception of the coastless state of Vermont. . . The leader in the opposition, as was to be expected, was Massachusetts, moved by her dominant maritime interests."³

It is true that the state of Vermont as a whole warmly championed the conduct of the war of 1812, and threw her

¹Hemenway: Vermont Historical Gazetteer, Vol. I, pp. 517-518.

²Ibid: p. 106.

³Sample: American History in its Geographic Conditions, pp. 135-6.

best efforts into the cause. Large numbers of men even from the northern towns where opposition was strong, served in the war—and ships were fitted out at Vergennes. At the same time, however, there were within the state the same sectional differences of opinion that occurred in other parts of the United States, and for the same reasons, which were largely geographic in their origin. The passage of the embargo and non-intercourse act, which cut off the trade between Vermont and her Canadian markets, was bitterly resisted in many of these northern Vermont towns. An example of the stand taken by these towns, tho perhaps an extreme case, is found in the town of Highgate, which lies on the Canadian border near Lake Champlain.

The people of the town, the historian says, were peculiarly situated; they were many of them former residents of the province, and had many things in common with the province inhabitants; they were accustomed to transport their lumber, pot and pearl ashes into Canada, where they were sold, or else exchanged for clothing, salt, or other commodities. . . which were needed. . . in the locality in which they lived and were not there readily obtainable. Therefore when Congress passed the obnoxious embargo and non-intercourse laws, and endeavored by the presence of armed troops to enforce them, the people of Highgate as well as of other localities regarded the measures as extremely oppressive, and a direct attack against the liberties they had ever enjoyed, an attack which created intense indignation throughout the town, and one which many persons were disposed to resist.¹ A certain amount of illicit trade went on across the border throughout the period of war.

Canadian trade continued to be of importance to the people of Vermont after the close of the War of 1812. This was true of the eastern as well as of the western part of the state. It was so important along a route from Montreal to the upper

¹Aldrich: Franklin and Grand Isle Counties, p. 601.

Connecticut, a route which followed in part one of the old Indian trails, that the Vermont legislature in 1820 appointed a committee "to lay out and establish a market road from the mouth of Wells river in Newbury, through the counties of Caledonia and Orleans to the north line of Berkshire, This highway was much used by the people of Northeastern Vermont in the winter season, who transported their produce, butter, and cheese to Montreal, and brought back on their return mainly salt and fish, which they received in exchange for their produce at that market."¹

Along such highways as this the inn and tavern of this period appeared. Stores often were built at convenient crossroads or corners. Here much bartering was engaged in between local dealers and the merchant who was collecting a load for transportation to a more distant market. Trade on the road that was built from Newbury was so good that a storage warehouse was built at Wells River. Records of the trade at this warehouse from "1809 to 1816, show that a great amount and variety of goods were received there, and that merchants and others, from towns sixty miles north of here, had their goods brought in this way. About one-third of the storage charges were for ardent spirits, and the downward freight seems to have consisted mainly of hides and ashes besides lumber."² Into this local and long distance trade entered most of the products of the manufacturing industries which grew up with the conquering of the frontier, as well as the staple products of home production, the grains, apples, maple sugar, potatoes, and hay. "Butter, cheese, ashes and salts of lye, were readily bartered at the local store for cotton goods, crockery, salt, tea, cured fish,"³ Wheat was more valuable than the coarser grains as an article of export. It was exchanged in the place of cash in the local trade, and was, like potash, one of the sure cash products in

¹Aldrich: Franklin and Grand Isle Counties, Montgomery, p. 556.

²Wells: Newbury, p. 301-2.

³Jones: Waitsfield, p. 167.

the early export trade. Wheat exported to Albany in the Revolutionary years was worth forty cents a bushel.

While the embargo of the war of 1812 worked a hardship in certain ways on the people of Vermont, it stimulated manufacturing. The years following that date, not only saw an increase in the number and output of various mills, but also some experiments in manufacturing undertaken. A cotton mill, the only one in northern Vermont, was built at Swanton in 1820 to furnish yarn to the settlers. "The cotton for the old mill came by way of Lake Champlain [probably from New York] to St. Albans Bay, and then through the woods by horse and ox-teams to the mill."¹ Ship building to provide boats for the lake and river trade was carried on to a considerable extent before 1820. Woollen mills gradually supplemented hand work. There was great demand for wool, and it was "more surely marketable product than butter or even cheese . . . nor must we forget to mention the old-time drover who gathered up the surplus of the of the flocks and herds and drove them two hundred miles to market."² After the first years many more sheep and fewer cattle, were raised than was the case later, or at present in Vermont.³ The breed of sheep was improved about the year 1800, when some choice sheep were brought in from Connecticut. Carding machines in mills were introduced about 1806, and helped to increased the output of woollen cloth. Handwoven materials were still made for home use, and even as an item of trade, but not in the quantities that had formerly been produced. An original settler in Bennington, who lived to see the town have "four thousand inhabitants,"

¹Aldrich: Franklin and Grand Isle Counties, Swanton, p. 414.

²Jones: Waitsfield, p. 168.

³Ibid: p. 168. Tables for Waitsfield

Year	Sheep	Cows
1803	697	165
1826	3212	555
1908	113	1843

claimed that in the year 1788 "by actual return, they made twenty-six thousand yards of cloth from flax of their own raising."¹

Most of the trade carried on with areas outside the state, went over routes to Boston and other southern New England ports, to New York state points, usually Albany and Troy, as well as to the Canadian points previously discussed. It is not remarkable that the two great routes which largely served the settlers as paths into a new country, should also serve them as they progressed in economic development. As was the case in the spread of settlement, so in the increase in volume and importance of Vermont trade, the Connecticut and its tributary routes took precedence over other lines for traffic.

In the years before development in western New York and in Ohio had advanced sufficiently to furnish raw materials and agricultural products, the trade of northern New England was of great importance to the older settlements. There was keen rivalry for this trade between Boston, Hartford, Springfield, New Haven and New York. The development in this trade covered the period of the utilization of waterways, prior to the supremacy of railroads. So important to Boston and the seacoast towns, was Vermont trade which flowed over this route, that Boston capital was employed in building canals around the rapids and falls on the Connecticut. "The one at Bellows Falls was short and had eight locks. There were shorter canals constructed at White River and Water Queechy. Boats were built . . . just wide enough to pass through the locks at these falls, and they saved all the labor and time required before, to unload each boat, and transport the merchandise around the rapids by teams."² At about the same time (1820), the Champlain canal was built, making

¹New Hampshire State Papers, Vol. 26, Town Charters, Vol. III. Appendix, p. 631.

²Wells: Newbury, p. 302.

water connection between Lake Champlain and the Hudson. Lumber, marble, and grain moved out of western Vermont over this route to a considerable extent. Troy and Albany continued to be markets for grain and other produce. "The expense of transportation to Troy for many years was only twenty-five cents per hundred, and coarse grains would hardly admit of transportation even at that low price."¹

The water routes, however, did not hold a monopoly for the flow of commerce and trade. The post roads developed with the improved waterways. There was much travel over the roads to southern New England, especially to Boston. Herds of cattle and sheep were driven over these roads. The produce of the settlers was often taken by teams, and a load of various supplies, especially groceries and clothing, brought back on the return trip. Sometimes "merchants went down to Boston by stage, sending their accumulation of butter, wool, cheese, flax, grain and seeds of various kinds, and, in winter dressed and frozen pork and beef by teams that took many weeks for the round trip."² Four, six, and eight horse stage coaches were soon regularly engaged in the Boston trade. Thus the routes which led the pioneers into Vermont in search of new fields for enterprise, were pressed into service to take the fruits of this region back to the older settlements from which the pioneers came.

¹Hollister: Pawlet, p. 99.

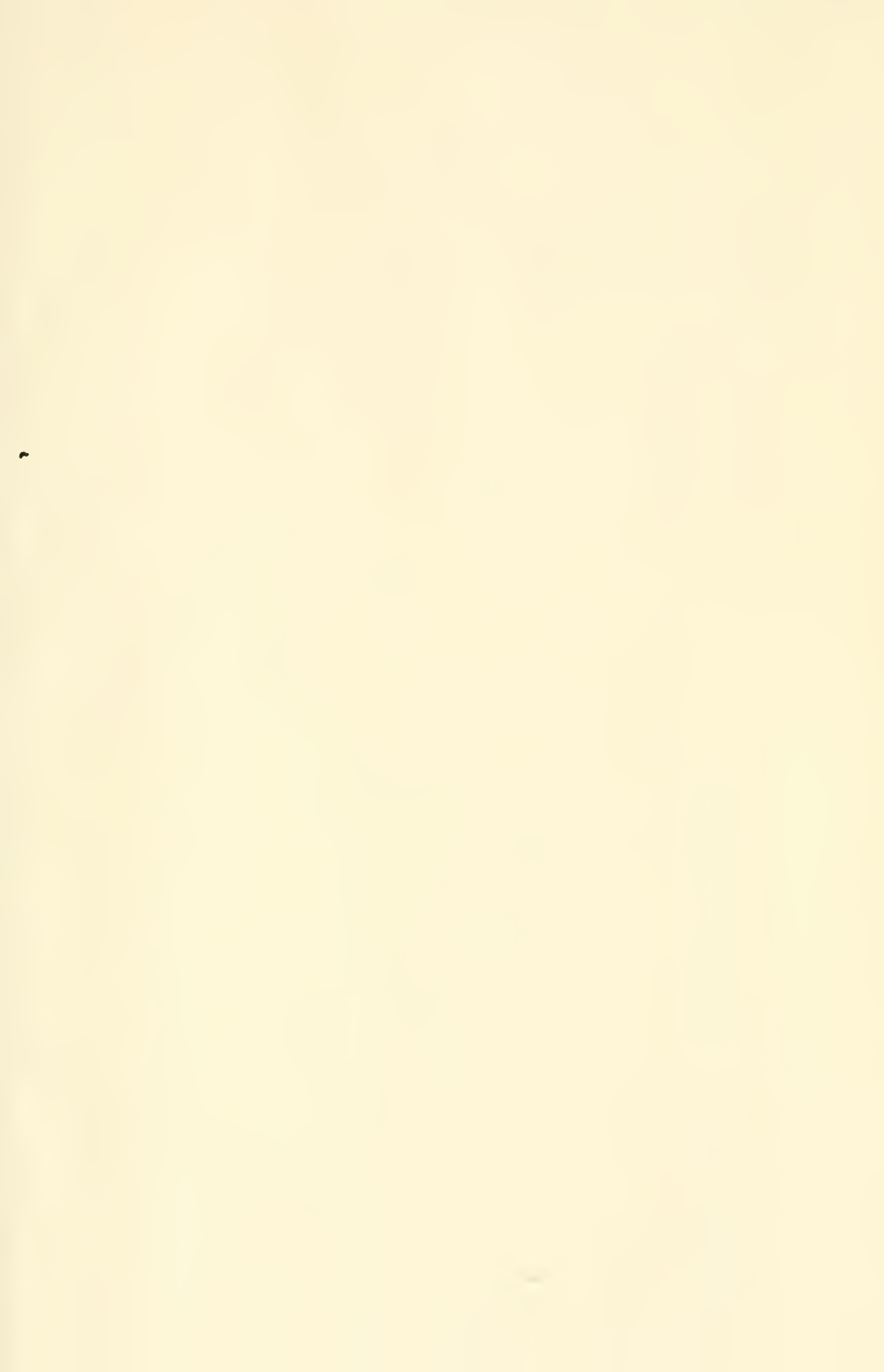
²Jones: Waitsfield, p. 165.

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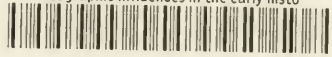


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